

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 HEW-08 L-03 AID-20 PM-07 NSC-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9181

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: LABOR - WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION FUND

REF: BANGKOK 18511

1. RELIABLE SOURCE HAS INFORMED EMBOFF THAT CABINET CONSIDERED DECEMBER 18 MATTER OF POSSIBLY DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF THAILAND'S FIRST IMPORTANT SOCIAL SECURITY LEGISLATION - WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION FUND - THAT IS SCHEDULED TO ENTER INTO EFFECT JANUARY 1, 1974. LABOR DEPARTMENT DG NIKHOM, WHO HAD TOLD EMBOFF PREVIOUS DAY THAT HE WAS OPTIMISTIC AS TO OUTCOME, APPARENTLY HAD DIFFICULTY IN PERSUADING CABINET (WHICH HAS SEVERAL STRONG DEFENDERS OF BUSINESS COMMUNITY) TO GO AHEAD WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF FUND. CABINET BELIEVED TO HAVE AGREED TO CONSULT FURTHER THIS WEEK WITH BOARD OF TRADE AND PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS BEFORE MAKING FINAL DECISION ON MATTER AT NEXT REGULAR CABINET MEETING.

2. COMMENT: FACT THAT CABINET TAKING UP MATTER AT ALL (UNDER EXISTING LEGISLATION RESPONSIBILITY IS NOW SOLELY WITH MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WHICH INCLUDES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR) INDICATES MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND LABOR DEPARTMENT DG VERY MUCH ON DEFENSIVE IN
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GOING AHEAD WITH FUND IMPLEMENTATION. RESPONSIBLE LABOR DEPT

OFFICIAL NOW PESSIMISTIC AS TO OUTCOME. BEFORE NEXT WEEK'S CABINET MEETING THERE IS POSSIBILITY THAT LABOR LEADERS AND OTHER FUND SUPPORTERS WILL MOUNT COUNTER-ATTACK, WARNING OF CONSEQUENCES IF SANYA GOVERNMENT AT TIME OF GREAT SOCIAL UNREST APPEARS TO SIDE WITH BUSINESS INTERESTS AND AGREES TO DELAY IMPLEMENTATION OF MOST PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL LEGISLATION PASSED BY THANOM REGIME.

3. ISSUE HAS POTENTIAL FOR CAUSING CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT TO SANYA GOVERNMENT BY INCITING WORKERS TO ATTACK IT RATHER THAN EMPLOYECX AGAINST WHOM RECENT WAVE OF STRIKE ACTION HAS BEEN DIRECTED. NOT ONLY IS LEGISLATION FOR ESTABLISHMENT'S FIRST

EVER WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION SYSTEM A PRODUCT OF PREVIOUS MILITARY REGIME, BUT IT IS SCHEDULED TO ENTER INTO EFFECT AT TIME WHEN LABOR ELEMENTS ARE FREER AND MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN THEY HAVE BEEN FOR MORE THAN DECADE.

4. NO ACTION BY WASHINGTON CALLED FOR IN THIS DOMESTIC MATTER DESPITE ITS POTENTIAL SERIOUSNESS. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE MONITOR DEVELOPMENTS. EVEN IF CABINET SHOULD DECIDE TO DELAY IMPLEMENTATION WORKER RESPONSE LIKELY TO BE SLOW IN DEVELOPING BECAUSE OF FRAGMENTED AND INEXPERIENCED NATURE OF EMERGING LABOR MOVEMENT. KINTNER

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